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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 3705
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 0723
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 2315
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JAN 0364
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 1339
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 2225
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 3037
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C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 000194

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E.O. 12958: DECL: TEN YEARS
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [EC](#)
SUBJECT: COMMERCE SECRETARY GUTIERREZ' MEETING WITH
ARGENTINA VP

Classified By: Erik Martini for reasons 1.4 (b&d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Argentinean Vice President Daniel Scioli met with Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez on the margins of Rafael Correa's presidential inauguration. Scioli and his delegation emphasized overall good relations, shared his views on how to improve the U.S. image in Latin America and vented frustration with Chavez's role in bringing Iranian President Ahmadinejad to Quito. He also noted MERCOSUR was "fine." Secretary Gutierrez commended President Kirchner's principled stance against Ahmadinejad's presence. End Summary.

Background

¶2. (SBU) In town for Rafael Correa's presidential inauguration, Vice President of Argentina Daniel Scioli met for over half an hour on January 15 with U.S. Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez. President Kirchner was

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originally slated to head the Argentinean delegation, but decided not to come when Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad confirmed his attendance. Also present in the meeting were Amb. Agustin Colombo Sierra, Assistant Secretary for Latin American Policy; Carlos Pineiro, Argentina's Ambassador to Ecuador, and Argentinean EmbOff Mauricio Nine. Secretary Gutierrez was accompanied by Walter Bastian,

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Commerce Deputy Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs; and PolOff Erik Martini (note taker).

Friendly Advice: Bilateral Trade Deals "Divisive"

¶3. (C) In a very cordial meeting, Vice President Scioli said President Kirchner saw relations with the U.S. as "friendly and strategic." He said any policy differences between our countries are perceived as much larger than they actually are. Following up on Scioli's comment on perception, Sec. Gutierrez asked for suggestions to improve the U.S. image in Argentina and Latin America. Scioli responded that we must remind people that "the United States of America is part of

America." The perception is that the U.S. has focused on other regions of the world and abandoned Latin America--we should "accelerate the rehabilitation" of our image. Colombo added that we are perceived as rigging the "rules of the game" when we cling to agriculture subsidies in trade negotiations, although he admitted that the EU was "just as bad." Scioli said USG pursuit of bilateral agreements in the region is seen as very "divisive."

¶4. (C) Secretary Gutierrez said that President Chavez is perceived by Americans as having heavy influence in Latin America and noted anti-American commentary by Chavez and Bolivian President Evo Morales. Ambassador Colombo asserted that such perceptions are "oversimplified" and suffer from a "lack of information". Secretary Gutierrez responded that they were nonetheless public perceptions, similar to believing that all of Latin America's woes were attributable to the U.S., a perception just as oversimplified and baseless. The Secretary acknowledged that the U.S. had much historical experience in Latin America. Scioli responded President Kirchner firmly believed that the U.S. also has a "future" in Latin America.

Chavez Responsible for Ahmadinejad's Presence

¶5. (C) Secretary Gutierrez praised President Kirchner for his decision not to attend the inauguration ceremony, in protest against Iranian responsibility for terror attacks in Buenos Aires. Colombo vehemently asserted that Chavez had invited Ahmadinejad, not Correa, and that Chavez was nothing more than a "provocateur." Scioli said Argentina saw itself as a "balancing" force in the region.

MERCOSUR Just Fine

¶6. (C) Secretary Gutierrez asked Scioli how things were going in MECOSUR. Scioli responded that while there were some problems things were generally "fine". Abruptly changing the topic to Argentina's internal conditions, Scioli said he was pleased with Argentina's growth and while demand was "excessive," Argentina's economy would maintain stability.

Comment

¶7. (C) The Argentineans took pains to portray themselves as friendly to the U.S., but made their opposition to U.S. bilateral trade deals in the region plain. Vice President Scioli also conveyed GOA discomfort and exasperation with Chavez's antics in the region.
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